

# Tips for Conducting Job Interviews

Behavior-based interview questions are designed to generate specific examples of ways in which applicants have performed similar tasks in the past. They also give you insight into the skills and abilities they possess, which will help them to succeed in the position they have applied for.

## Behavior-based interview questions will:

- Give you specific examples of an applicant's past behavior, which will help you predict how the applicant would perform in the new position.
- Help you focus on the essential duties of a position rather than on individual characteristics of the applicants.
- Provide an accurate basis for comparing applicants.
- Give the applicants a clear picture of the responsibilities associated with a position.

## Prepare for the interview

### Review the job description and posting and formulate questions based on the posting, for example:

- What factual information does an applicant need to have? How can it be demonstrated? For example, does this job require technical training? Completion of a particular degree program? Special certification?
- What kind of "how-to" experience is necessary to perform this job? Consider which skills the applicant needs to possess, and which can be acquired on the job.
- What talents and personality characteristics are needed to be successful in this position? What types of experience would demonstrate these abilities?

## Plan the interview:

- Determine the order of questions and any follow up discussions
- If more than one interviewer will be used, decide on the role each will play and the questions each will ask
- Create an organized method for taking notes

Review the applicants' background information. Note any questions or clarification you may need from each applicant.

## Schedule the interview, remembering to:

- Reserve a quiet, comfortable, private place to conduct interview.
- Utilize technology when appropriate (Skype, Google Hangout, etc.)
- Plan your schedule to avoid interruptions; don't take phone calls or walk-in visitors during the interview.
- Schedule additional time before and after the interview to prepare and allow for questions from the applicant.
- Arrange the interview space to avoid sitting across a desk from the applicant.

## Conduct the interview

Begin by welcoming the applicant, making sure he/she is physically comfortable, and using small talk to put the applicant at ease. Be sure not to ask inappropriate or personal questions.

### Once you and the applicant are settled:

- Explain the interview procedure
- Tell applicant that you will be taking notes
- Provide the applicant with a copy of the position description and ask if he/she has questions about the position before you begin
- Notify the applicant that you will allow time for questions at the end of the interview as well.
- Briefly discuss the applicant's application/resume and clarify any questions about the applicant's background information

Remember that the goal of applicant interviews is to obtain information from applicants regarding their qualifications and to gain specific examples of job-related past behavior. The following **communication skills** will help you encourage and clarify applicant responses:

**Restate** what the applicant told you in your own words. For example: "Let me be sure I understand. You did X, and Z happened. Is that correct?"

**Show interest** in what the applicant is saying by smiling, nodding your head, using the applicant's name, and periodically saying "OK," "That's interesting," "I understand," etc.

**Use silence** to avoid allowing the applicant to not give you a response. Avoid the temptation to talk when an applicant is quiet or is not fully responding to interview questions. Give the applicant time to think of specific examples.

Use **follow-up questions** to gather specific information about an applicant's responses. Questions such as "How did you handle that situation?" or "Tell me more about what you did next" can be helpful.

**Redirect** an applicant if he/she is getting off target on a question by saying words such as, "That's interesting, but please tell me specifically about..."

**Move on** when you feel you are not going to get an answer to a specific line of questions and follow ups.

### **Close the interview**

- Ask the applicant whether they have anything else to share about their knowledge, skills, and abilities
- Provide information about the position's pay, benefits, and working conditions
- Tell the applicant when you expect to communicate your hiring decision
- Ask the applicant if they have any additional questions about the position
- Explain any additional application steps necessary (i.e. background check, visa paperwork)
- Thank the applicant for his/her time